

STEPHEN M. LINSKY – WARD 2 ALDERMAN

CONSTITUENT UPDATE

‘NEW TURF’

Hello Everyone:

I would like to take the opportunity to elaborate a bit on the reference in my most recent annual constituent report to the set of public discussions relative to the New Turf proposal.

Every year, I tour a number of our public fields with the Parks and Recreation maintenance director to better appreciate the state of these resources. Assuming no significant changes to field supply and demand, it has become evident to me the city’s ongoing ability to properly maintain and sustain these resources is problematic under present circumstances. To properly sustain these fields, we would need to create a rotation that would require leaving some fields fallow. Given present use, and particularly given the off-siting of Newton North fall and spring sports for the next three years, our ability to initiate such a rotation would appear to be compromised.

It is in this context, and this context only, that alternatives, including synthetic surfaces, should be considered if our goal is to sustain our inventory of natural turf playing surfaces over an extended period of time. I share a number of the concerns raised by those who question the environmental safety of synthetic surfaces. To be sure, the jury is still out given the relatively short period of time in which the present generation of these surfaces has been in use. Consequently, should we turn to synthetic surfaces, it should be in a very deliberate fashion, limited to meeting the amount of field use minimally required.

My sense is that the present proposal for South is far too extensive for these purposes. I appreciate the relative cost savings that could be achieved by the economy of scale proposed. But this is outweighed by all other considerations. Assuming we can effectively address residual environmental concerns as well as the drainage considerations, and absent the provision of new facilities from some other source such as one of the private educational or recreational institutions in the city, the installation of one synthetic field and track facility at Newton South, just as we are planning to provide in the proposed Newton North project, is worthy of support.